



## GRO Initiative Shows Just How Much Partnership Matters

In Rural Missouri, partnership is what keeps communities going. Small towns that join together make big differences in bringing positive changes to their regions. That is exactly what the Community Foundation of the Ozarks is doing.

The Community Foundation of the Ozarks has been dedicated to working with donors, nonprofit partners and affiliated community foundations in meaningful and purposeful ways. The organization has been active in rural communities and spent the last 23 years working directly with smaller communities which is how the Growth in the Rural Ozarks (GRO) Initiative came about.

“We can help build strong schools, and develop nonprofit capacity, but without economic opportunity, our smaller communities cannot grow and prosper,” said CFO President Brian Fogle.

The Community Foundation of the Ozarks worked with Rural Development and received a \$50,000 Rural Business Development Grant to assist with funding for the GRO initiative.

The GRO Initiative will provide professional economic development assistance for three communities in southern Missouri. Initially, 16 communities applied to be a part of the GRO initiative but only three were selected. Those communities were Sarcoxie, Salem and Marshfield, all towns with populations of less than 8,000. These communities were selected by the Foundation through a competitive process.

Each of these communities will be provided with an economic development professional contracted by the Foundation. The economic development professionals will help with identifying, recruiting and retaining business in each community with a focus in promoting job creation, entrepreneurship and workforce development for a three-year time frame. It is anticipated that the assessment, planning, and development of a long-range economic development plan may take up to one year, and the remaining two years will be spent implementing.

Through revitalization and development, the Community Foundation of the Ozarks is doing great things for the region. By helping the cities of Salem, Marshfield and Sarcoxie, they are taking the right steps to strengthen and identify the needs of these communities through new partnerships, resources and networks.



*Rural Development celebrates with Sarcoxie, one of three communities selected for participation in the Community Foundation of the Ozarks—Growth in the Rural Ozarks (CFO GRO) Program.*

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**Obligation Amount:** \$50,000 Grant

**Date of Obligation:** 5/10/2016

**Congressional District:** Representative Long, MO 07; Senators McCaskill and Blunt

**Partners:** Applicant contributed \$55,000; Local communities contributed \$15,000

**Demographics:** The combined population of the communities is 12,913. The Service Area covers both Strike Force Initiative and Rural Poverty Target Strategy Areas.

**Impact:** GRO will result in job creation and economic development in three rural communities

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